

How Does *Alcohol* Affect the World of a *Child?*



COMMUNITY

“Alcohol is the number one drug of choice among our Nation’s youth. Yet the seriousness of this issue does not register with the general public or policymakers.” —Enoch Gordis, M.D., Director, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

- An overwhelming number of Americans (96%) are concerned about underage drinking, and a majority support measures that would help reduce teen drinking, such as stricter controls on alcohol sales, advertising, and promotion.¹
- Recent advertising expenditures in the United States for beer, wine, and liquor combined (\$1.2 billion) totaled more than 10 times the amount spent on milk ads (\$70.5 million). A total of \$764.2 million was spent on beer ads, \$131.5 million on wine ads, and \$291.2 million on liquor ads.^{2, 3}
- A study of fifth- and sixth-grade students found that those who demonstrated an awareness of beer ads also held more favorable beliefs about drinking and intended to drink more frequently when they grew up.⁴
- One study of Midwestern States found that 46% of ninth graders who reported drinking alcohol in the previous month said they obtained the alcohol from a person aged 21 or older.⁵
- In a study conducted in 38 States and the District of Columbia, areas with greater numbers of drinking establishments had higher rates of alcoholism.⁶
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that the 21-year-old minimum drinking age laws have saved 19,121 lives since the mid-1970s.⁷
- Among drivers aged 15-20, fatal crashes involving a single vehicle at night are three times more likely than other fatal crashes to be alcohol-related.⁸

¹ Wagenaar, A.C., et al. *The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Youth Access To Alcohol Survey: Summary*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Alcohol Epidemiology Program, 1998.

² Adams Business Media. *Liquor Handbook 1999*. New York: Author, 1999; Adams Business Media. *Wine Handbook 1999*. New York: Author, 1999; Adams Business Media. *Beer Handbook 1999*. New York: Author, 1999.

³ Blisard, N., et al. *Analyses of Generic Dairy Advertising, 1984-97*. Technical Bulletin No. 1873. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service. March 1999. (p.10)

⁴ Grube, J.W., & Wallack, L. Television beer advertising and drinking knowledge, beliefs, and intentions among schoolchildren. *American Journal of Public Health* 84(2):254-259, 1994.

⁵ Wagenaar, A.C., et al. Sources of alcohol for underage drinkers. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 57(3):325-333, 1996.

⁶ Harford, T.C., et al. Relationship between the number of on-premise outlets and alcoholism. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 40(11):1053-1057, 1979.

⁷ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *Traffic Safety Facts 1999—Alcohol*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Transportation.

⁸ Hingson, R., et al. Lower legal blood alcohol limits for young drivers. *Public Health Reports* 109(6):738-744, 1994.

ASK YOURSELF

As Parents

- Do you know how to discuss alcohol use with your child and where to get information to help you?
- Do you know your child's friends, and do you feel that they provide positive influences on your child's activities?
- Do you know the extent of drinking by children in your neighborhood and how to find local organizations that are working on the issue?
- Do you know the legal consequences if your child is caught drinking alcohol?
- Do you know your State's laws about providing alcohol to anyone under 21?

As Teachers, Administrators, and School Counselors

- Has your school or community assessed student drinking to determine the extent of the problem?
- Do you know what factors may be contributing to student drinking in your school or community (e.g., easy access to alcohol, peer pressure, adults' failure to address the issue)?
- Do you know what steps, if any, are being taken within your school system to help kids resist the pressure to drink?
- Is your school currently working to educate parents about alcohol use among children?
- Does your school have an active partnership with the families of its students?

As Concerned Citizens

- Do you know how easily children in your community can obtain alcohol and what communities can do to prevent access to alcohol by young people?
- Does your community have educational programs and policies to prevent children from drinking?
- Does your community have "alcohol-free" events? If not, do you know how to initiate them?
- Is there collaboration among public and private schools, community businesses, local government, and the police force to develop and enforce policies related to youth alcohol use?

For information about preventing alcohol use by children, e-mail *Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free* at: Leadership@alcoholfreechildren.org.

FAMILY

"I've seen alcohol at work in my family and that's enough for a lifetime. I'm not drinking." —Matthew, Michigan

- Nearly 17% of children under 14 and 20% of children under 18 live with a parent (or responsible adult) who drinks heavily or has an alcohol problem.¹
- Current research suggests children are less likely to drink when their parents are involved with them and when they and their parents report feeling close to each other.^{2, 3}
- Adolescents drink less and have fewer alcohol-related problems when their parents discipline them consistently and set clear expectations.²
- Children of alcoholics are significantly more likely to initiate drinking during adolescence and to develop alcohol use disorders.⁴
- Parents' drinking behaviors and favorable attitudes about drinking have been associated with adolescents' initiating and continuing drinking.^{2,5,6}
- Any drinking during pregnancy, even "social drinking," can put offspring at risk for learning and behavioral problems during adolescence.⁷

¹ Alcohol Epidemiologic Data System, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. [Number of children living with parent who has alcohol problem.] Unpublished data, 1999. Based on National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism 1992 *National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey*.

² Hawkins, J.D., et al. Exploring the effects of age of alcohol use initiation and psychosocial risk factors on subsequent alcohol misuse. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 58(3):280-290, 1997.

³ Resnick, M.D., et al. Protecting adolescents from harm: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 278(10):823-832, 1997.

⁴ National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Youth Drinking: Risk Factors and Consequences. Alcohol Alert No.37, July 1997.

⁵ Andrews, J.A., et al. Parental influence on early adolescent substance use: Specific and nonspecific effects. *Journal of Early Adolescence* 13(3):285-310, 1993.

⁶ Ary, D.V., et al. The influence of parent, sibling, and peer modeling and attitudes on adolescent use of alcohol. *International Journal of the Addictions* 28(9):853-880, 1993.

⁷ Olson, H.C., et al. Association of prenatal alcohol exposure with behavioral and learning problems in early adolescence. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 36(9):1187-1194, 1997.

THE CHILD

“Parents must understand that they are the first line of defense in raising healthy children.” —Peggy Sapp, President, National Family Partnership

- Seventy-five percent of eighth graders and 89% of tenth graders believe that alcohol is readily available to them for consumption.¹
- Forty percent of ninth-grade students reported having consumed alcohol before they were 13.² In contrast, only 27% of ninth graders reported having smoked cigarettes and 13% having used marijuana before they were 13.²
- Forty-one percent of ninth-grade students reported drinking in the past month, while only 28% reported smoking in the past month.²
- Almost one-third of eighth graders and one-half of tenth graders have been drunk at least once.¹
- One-fifth of ninth graders reported binge drinking (having had five or more drinks on one occasion) in the past month.²
- Rates of drinking differ among racial and ethnic minority groups. Among ninth graders, binge drinking was reported by 27% of non-Hispanic white students, 30% of Hispanic students, 15% of African American students, and 5% of Asian-Pacific Islander students.³
- The gap between alcohol use by boys and girls has closed. Among ninth graders, girls consume alcohol and binge drink at rates equal to boys.²
- More than 40% of individuals who start drinking before the age of 13 will develop alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence at some point in their lives.⁴
- If the onset of drinking is delayed by 5 years, a child’s risk of serious alcohol problems is decreased by 50%.⁵

¹ Johnston, L.D., et al. National survey results on drug use from the Monitoring the Future Study, 1995-1997. Volume I: Secondary school students. Rockville, MD. National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1998.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 1999. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: CDC Surveillance Summaries* 49(No. SS-5):1-94, 2000.

³ Alcohol Epidemiologic Data System, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. [Racial/ethnic breakdown of youth alcohol rates.] Unpublished data, 1999. Based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance*, 1997.

⁴ Grant, B.F., & Dawson, D.A. Age at onset of alcohol use and association with DSM-IV alcohol abuse and dependence: Results from the National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey. *Journal of Substance Abuse* 9:103-110, 1997.

⁵ Calculated from information contained in: Grant, B.F., & Dawson, D.A. Age at onset of alcohol use and association with DSM-IV alcohol abuse and dependence: Results from the National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey. *Journal of Substance Abuse* 9:103-110, 1997.

SCHOOL

“Alcohol almost destroyed my life. I started out drinking with my friends, trying to be cool. I drank to get drunk . . . and I did some stupid things while I was drunk. Now I’m trying to get my life back, and it’s not easy with a baby.” —Amy, Colorado

- Evidence suggests that alcohol use by peers is a strong predictor of adolescent use of alcohol.¹
- According to a 1995 national survey of fourth through sixth graders who read the Weekly Reader, 30% of students reported that they received “a lot” of pressure from their classmates to drink beer.²
- According to this same 1995 Weekly Reader survey, more than half (54%) of fourth through sixth graders reported learning about the dangers of illicit drugs at school, but fewer than a third (30%) learned about the dangers of drinking and smoking at school.²
- Among eighth graders, students with higher grade point averages reported less alcohol use in the past month.³
- Research indicates that adolescents who abuse alcohol may remember 10% less of what they have learned than those who don’t drink.⁴
- Among eighth graders, higher truancy rates were associated with greater rates of alcohol use in the past month.³
- One national study found that students are less likely to use alcohol if they are close to people at school, are a part of their school, and feel that teachers treat students fairly.⁵
- In a survey of seventh-through twelfth-grade teachers, 76% felt that underage student drinking was a serious or somewhat serious problem.⁶

¹ Hawkins, J.D., et al. Exploring the effects of age of alcohol use initiation and psychosocial risk factors on subsequent alcohol misuse. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 58(3):280-290, 1997.

² *The Weekly Reader National Survey on Drugs and Alcohol*, Middletown, CT: Field Publications, Spring 1995.

³ O'Malley, P.M., et al. Alcohol use among adolescents. *Alcohol Health & Research World* 22(2):85-93, 1998.

⁴ Brown, S.A., et al. Neurocognitive functioning of adolescents: effects of protracted alcohol use. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 24(2):164-171.

⁵ Resnick, M.D., et al. Protecting adolescents from harm: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 278(10):823-832, 1997.

⁶ Metropolitan Life/Louis Harris Associates, Inc. *The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 1984-1995*. Cited in Department of Education. *Digest of Education Statistics, 1996*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 1996.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

"Underage alcohol use is a significant threat to the health and safety of our children. It is time for us to come to grips with this widespread, devastating public health problem." —Steven A. Schroeder, M.D., President/CEO, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

- In a 1999 survey, 31% of ninth graders reported having ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol. Nearly 5% of ninth graders reported driving one or more times while drinking.¹
- Of all children under age 15 killed in vehicle crashes in 1998, 20% were killed in alcohol-related crashes.²
- Among 12- to 17-year-old current drinkers, 31% had extreme levels of psychological distress, and 39% exhibited serious behavioral problems.³
- In 1997, suicide and homicide accounted for nearly 16% of the total deaths among children aged 9-15.⁴ Twenty-eight percent of the suicides and 46% of the homicides could be attributed directly to alcohol.⁵
- Current drinkers among a nationally representative sample of youth aged 12-16 had higher levels of diastolic blood pressure than did their nondrinking counterparts.⁶
- Adolescents who drink heavily assume the same long-term health risks as adults who drink heavily.⁷
- Twelve- to sixteen-year-old girls who are current drinkers are four times more likely than their nondrinking peers to suffer depression.⁸
- Adolescent females who drink exhibit higher levels of estradiol (an estrogen) and testosterone than nondrinking girls. High levels of estrogen may contribute to increased risk for specific diseases, including breast cancer; high levels of testosterone are associated with an increased risk of substance use.⁹

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 1999. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: CDC Surveillance Summaries* 49(No. SS-5):1-94, 2000.

² National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *Traffic Safety Facts 1998—Children*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Transportation, 1999.

³ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *The Relationship Between Mental Health and Substance Abuse Among Adolescents*. Rockville, MD: Author, 1999.

⁴ Calculated from the *Multiple Cause of Death Public Use Data File*, National Center for Health Statistics, 1997.

⁵ Calculated by applying alcohol-attributed fractions for individuals older than 15, found in National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. *State Trends in Alcohol Mortality, 1979-1992. U.S. Alcohol Epidemiologic Data Reference Manual*, Volume 5. Rockville, MD: NIAAA, 1996.

⁶ Hanna, E.Z., et al. Drinking, smoking, and blood pressure: Do their relationships among youth foreshadow what we know among adults? Paper presented at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, November 1999.

⁷ *Alcohol Health and Research World*, Volume 17, No.2. Rockville, MD: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1993.

⁸ Hanna, E.Z., et al. The relationship of drinking alone and other substance use alone and in combination to health and behavior problems among youth aged 12-16: Findings from the Third National Health and Nutrition Survey (NHANES III). Paper presented at the 23rd Annual Scientific Meeting of the Research Society on Alcoholism, June 24-29, 2000, Denver, CO.

⁹ Martin, C.A., et al. Alcohol use in adolescent females: Correlates of estradiol and testosterone. *American Journal on Addiction* 8(1):9-14, 1999.

LEADERSHIP TO KEEP CHILDREN ALCOHOL FREE

Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free, a unique coalition of Governors' spouses, Federal agencies, and public and private organizations, is an initiative to prevent the use of alcohol by children ages 9 to 15. It is the only national effort that focuses on this age group. Evidence shows that young people are drinking more at earlier ages and that alcohol can have serious, often lifelong consequences for their health and well-being. The *Leadership* initiative is alerting the Nation to this critical public health problem and mobilizing action to prevent it.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERS

Initiative Founders

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Funding Partners

Office of Research on Women's Health
National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

For more information contact
leadership@alcoholfreechildren.org

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IMPACT ON SOCIETY

- Approximately 14 million Americans—about 7.4% of the adult population—meet the diagnostic criteria for alcohol abuse or alcoholism.¹
- More than one-half of American adults have a close family member who has or has had alcoholism.²
- The total cost attributable to the consequences of underage drinking is more than \$58 billion per year in 1998 dollars.³
- In 1998, the estimated annual cost of alcohol abuse in the U.S. was \$185 billion. Alcohol use disorders cost \$56.7 billion more than the estimated annual economic cost of illegal drug use and \$36.5 billion more than the estimated annual economic cost of smoking.^{4, 5}
- In 1992, the estimated productivity loss for employees with past or current alcoholism was \$66.7 billion. Productivity losses were greatest for male employees who initiated drinking before age 15.⁴
- In a survey of 18- to 24-year-old current drinkers who failed to complete high school, nearly 60% had begun to drink before age 16.⁶
- In 1996, the average American drank 32 gallons of beer compared to 52 gallons of soft drinks, 24 gallons of milk, and 23 gallons of coffee.⁷
- Men who consume more than two alcoholic drinks per day are at increased risk for cancer, cerebrovascular disease, accidents, and violence.⁸
- Long-term heavy alcohol use is the leading cause of illness and death from liver disease in the U.S.⁸
- Alcohol is implicated in more than 100,000 deaths annually.⁹
- In 1996, about 2 million (38%) of the estimated 5.3 million convicted offenders under the jurisdiction of corrections agencies were drinking at the time of the offense.¹⁰

¹ Grant, B.F., et al. Prevalence of DSM-IV alcohol abuse and dependence: United States, 1992. *Alcohol Health & Research World* 18(3):243-248, 1994.

² Dawson, D.A., & Grant, B.F. Family history of alcoholism and gender: Their combined effects on DSM-IV alcohol dependence and major depression. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 59(1):97-106, 1998.

³ Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation. *Costs of Underage Drinking*. Prepared for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention National Leadership Conference, July 11-14, 1999, Reston, VA. In support of the OJJDP Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Program under contract 98-AH-F8-0114.

⁴ Updated estimate based on draft report prepared for NIAAA by the Lewin Group, October 1999. Underlying estimates reported in Harwood, H., et al. *The Economic Costs of Alcohol and Drug Abuse in the United States, 1992*. Rockville, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1998.

⁵ U.S. Department of the Treasury. *The Economic Costs of Smoking in the United States and the Benefits of Comprehensive Tobacco Legislation*. Washington, DC: Author, 1998.

⁶ National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. *Drinking in the United States: Main Findings from the 1992 National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey (NLAES)*. U.S. Alcohol Epidemiologic Data Reference Manual, Volume 6. Bethesda, MD: Author, 1998.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1998* (118th ed.). Washington, DC: Author, 1998.

⁸ National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. 10th Special Report to the U.S. Congress on Alcohol and Health. Rockville, MD: NIAAA, June 2000.

⁹ McGinnis, J.M., & Foege, W.H. Actual causes of death in the United States. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 270(18):2207-2212, 1993.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. *Alcohol and Crime: An Analysis of National Data on the Prevalence of Alcohol Involvement in Crime*. (NCJ-168632). Washington, DC: Author, 1998.



ALCOHOL IS NOT A KID'S DRINK

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- Research indicates that adolescents who abuse alcohol may remember 10% less of what they have learned than those who don't drink.
- More than 40% of individuals who begin drinking before age 13 will develop alcohol abuse or alcohol dependency at some point in their lives.
- Almost one-third of eighth graders and half of tenth graders have been drunk at least once. One-fifth of ninth graders report binge drinking (consuming five or more drinks in a row) in the past month.